

WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE  
UNITED STATES: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO  
OBTAINING THE POSITION

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the School of Graduate Studies  
Drake University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by  
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September 1979

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WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE  
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The problem. Women are not equally represented in the ranks of public school administration in the United States. Although they compose more than 60 percent of the teaching force, a very small percentage of women hold administrative positions. This percentage is declining. Why are there more men than women in administrative positions in education? Why is the number and percentage of women continuing to decline? Are women required to have personal and job related characteristics different from men who seek administrative positions? Are certain factors helping or hindering men and women in attaining top level management jobs such as the superintendency?

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of the study is to discover what, if any, salient characteristics can be identified as important for women in gaining top level management positions in education, and to identify helping and hindering factors related to obtaining the position of superintendent as perceived by men and women currently serving in that capacity.

Procedures. A nationwide sample of men and women superintendents responded to a thirty-five item questionnaire designed to gather data regarding the respondent's personal and job related characteristics, and their perceptions of twenty factors identified in the literature as influencing the attainment of the position of superintendent. The descriptive data were accumulated to determine similarities and differences. The twenty factors were rated by respondents on a scale from (1) greatly hindered to (5) greatly helped. Means of the ratings of these factors by men and women were analyzed.

Findings. Examination of the data dealing with personal and job related characteristics shows similarities and differences between men and women. Women had more experience and were appointed to their first position at an older age. They made less money than did men and served in smaller districts. About one third of the women were single and women had fewer children. There was a significant correlation in the rankings of the helping and hindering

factors by men and women. They ranked the factors about the same. Only four of the twenty factors were rated differently to a significant degree. These factors were: "Being a man or a woman," "High percent of males in administration," "Support of college and university placement services," and "School board attitudes, opinions, and philosophy."

Conclusions. Men and women superintendents have similar personal and job related characteristics. Women differ in the areas of age at first appointment, years of work experience prior to first appointment, marital status, salary and size of district where employed. Men and women perceive their gender to be a factor in helping and hindering them in the attainment of the superintendency. Men felt it to be of help, women saw it as no help or a hindrance. No one factor stands out as the primary reason why the number and percentage of women administrators continues to decline.

Recommendations. Other studies in this area should focus on the attitudes of school boards toward female applicants, college and university placement services, and numbers of women seeking superintendencies or qualified for but not serving as superintendents. If sex discrimination is a factor in the decline, it must be more clearly identified through further study in this area.

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## Chapter 1

### RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

#### Introduction

Although women compose more than a majority of the teachers in the education profession they are under-represented in educational administration.<sup>1</sup> Federal legislation and the women's movement appear to have had little effect in increasing the number or percentage of women administrators. In fact, statistics reveal that the percentage of women occupying line administrative positions is decreasing.<sup>2</sup> This decrease has been documented in a study by the National Council of Administrative Women in Education, published in 1975.<sup>3</sup> Current statistics presented by

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, Sex Equality in Educational Administration, AASA Executive Handbook Series, Vol. VII, No. 3 (Arlington: American Association of School Administrators, 1976), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Marilyn Neidig, "The Rise and Decline of Women Administrators," National Elementary Principal, LVI (November/December, 1976), 53.

<sup>3</sup>National Council of Administrative Women in Education, Wanted, More Women in Educational Leadership (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1975), p. 1.

the Education Commission of the States indicate that the percent of women administrators continues to drop. In Iowa, for example, "of 474 superintendents, one is female (0.2 percent); there are 99 (6 percent) women serving as principals and assistant principals. Women comprise 63 percent (20,750) of the state's 33,100 classroom teachers."<sup>1</sup>

According to the American Association of School Administrators Handbook: Sex Equality in Educational Administration, "The percentage of women school superintendents in local operating and intermediate districts combined dropped from 9 percent in 1950 to a little over 1 percent in 1972. There is little reason to believe this trend has not continued."<sup>2</sup>

What are the reasons for this decline? Are different qualifications and skills necessary for women to become successful in top management in education? Are experience and training requirements the same for men and women? Are certain personal characteristics desired? To what extent might other types of factors hinder women or help men in the attainment of the position of superintendent? Do such hindering or helping factors exist?

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<sup>1</sup>Education Commission of the States, Equal Rights for Women in Education, A Handbook of State Laws and Policies Affecting Equal Rights for Women in Education, Report No. 97 (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1976), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>AASA, op. cit., p. 17.

Several factors have been identified in current literature as having an influence on the number of women entering the field of school administration. Among these are the following:

- . competition for jobs is greater
- . discipline in secondary level administration is a problem
- . more men are finding education economically attractive
- . women are content with short term career goals
- . women will not seek promotion
- . women do not desire to become administrators
- . marriage and family conflict with women's career plans
- . men are in power positions to hire (superintendents and boards)

In addition to identifying these and other elements that influence the number of women in administrative positions a better understanding of these factors is needed.<sup>1</sup> Women superintendents themselves have speculated about some of these problems. One superintendent reflects that

A young woman is not taken seriously, but let your hair go gray and your figure grow thick and you are no longer viewed as a feminine object. That's when the irony sets in, because they begin to look at you<sup>2</sup> twice--as a person and as an administrator.

To what extent do women who have reached the superintendency feel they have been subject to sex discrimination?

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<sup>1</sup>Barbara Zakrajsek, "Alternatives to Women's Lib, Obtaining a Principalship," NASSP Bulletin, LX, No. 399 (April, 1976), 96.

<sup>2</sup>Lorraine Collins, "About Those Few Females Who Scale the Heights of School Management," American School Board Journal, June, 1976, p. 27.

How are men and women serving as superintendents similar in terms of age, experience, family responsibilities, training? Do they differ in their perceptions of how some of these various helping or hindering factors have influenced their promotion to the superintendency? Can any factors be identified as influencing the decline in the percentage of women in school administration?

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, to discover what, if any, salient characteristics can be identified as important for women in gaining top level management positions in education. The study sought to determine if such identified characteristics are different from those displayed by men in the same positions. Second, the study identifies helping/hindering factors related to obtaining the position of superintendent, and presents data which shows how these factors are perceived by men and women as helping or hindering attainment of the position.

### Definitions

Superintendent is defined as the chief administrator of a school district elected by a board of directors.

### Related Literature

The review of the literature documents the current decline in the number of women administrators in public education, identifies factors influencing the phenomenon, and discusses the problems that women aspiring to school administration face. It describes suggestions for special training to meet the need resulting from these problems.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used to gather the descriptive data about men and women superintendents and their perceptions of factors which influenced the obtaining of that position was developed by the researcher of this study. The procedures for development and field testing of this instrument are described in Chapter 3 under instrumentation.

### Objectives of the Study

This study attempted to answer the following questions.

1. What, if any, common personal and/or job related characteristics exist among women and men currently serving as superintendents in public schools in the United States?

2. What, if any, similarities or differences in personal and/or job related characteristics exist between

men and women in superintendencies in public schools in the United States?

3. What helping/hindering factors identified in current literature are perceived by women and men as helping or hindering the attainment of that position?

### Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between women's and men's reported perceptions of the relative effects of the various helping/hindering factors as they pertain to the attainment of the superintendency.

Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in women's and men's reported perceptions of each identified helping/hindering factors effect on the attainment of the superintendency.

### Limitations

The study was limited to superintendents of public elementary and secondary schools in the United States.

### Assumptions

1. Men and women superintendents in public education possess identifiable personal and/or job related characteristics.

2. The perceptions of men and women superintendents of the factors seen as helping/hindering the attainment of their position are honest and do not reflect outside influences or biases.



## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of the literature related to women in educational leadership reveals many commonalities in both research and descriptive reports. The literature documents the current decline in both the number and percentage of women administrators in public education, identifies factors influencing this phenomenon and discusses the characteristics and training needed for women to become successful administrators.

#### Evidence of Decline

The reduction in the number and percentage of females in administrative positions in the United States has been discussed in numerous articles and papers. The focus on equal educational opportunities and equal employment opportunities brought about by federal legislation has caused many to scrutinize the percentage of women in all occupational areas. Whereas in some professional fields the number and percentage of women is increasing, these same figures for women in administration in public education continue to decline. Reductions in percentage distributions in the ranks of secondary administration in the last

twenty-five years are documented by several writers and researchers. "In 1950-1951, 12 percent of the junior high and 6 percent of the senior high principals were women. Today a mere 2 percent of all secondary principals are women."<sup>1</sup>

The superintendency, the top level management position in public education is currently held by less than 0.1 percent women.<sup>2</sup> The American Association of School Administrators has identified the decline as being from 9 percent in 1950 to 1 percent in 1972.<sup>3</sup>

In a 1976 report published by the Education Commission of the States, twenty states had either no women superintendents or less than one percent superintendents who were female.<sup>4</sup> Some states reporting a high percentage of women superintendents still maintain county systems in which superintendents are elected rather than appointed by school boards. Although some states do report a high percentage, the actual number of women serving as

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<sup>1</sup>National Council of Administrative Women in Education, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Martha M. McCarthy and Lillian D. Webb, "Women School Administrators: A Status Report," NASSP Bulletin, XL, No. 408 (April, 1977), 49.

<sup>3</sup>AASA, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Education Commission of the States, op. cit., pp. 1-55.

superintendents is small. Table 1 shows the number and percentage of women superintendents or assistant superintendents in the United States in 1976.<sup>1</sup> This data is not complete as some states had no information service to provide the Education Commission of the States with such data.

### Why the Decline?

Many writers address themselves to the reasons for the decline in the number of women school administrators. These reasons can be roughly divided into two categories: External factors operating upon the women and the system, and internal factors dealing with the character and personality of individual women and the social pressures that determine their psychological make-up.

External factors are more easily identified. Declining enrollment and consolidation have eliminated many administrative positions across the country. Perhaps even more important economic reasons caused an increase in the number of males in education and a subsequent increase in the number of male administrators. Following World War II and the Korean War a large number of men were given free advanced education through the G.I. Bill. Many of these men entered teaching.<sup>2</sup> Possibly correlated with this increase

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>AASA, op. cit., p. 9.

Table 1

Numbers and Percentages of Women Superintendents/Assistant  
Superintendents of Public Schools in the United States  
in 1976

State	Number of Women	Percent
Florida	293	19%
Hawaii	4	19
Tennessee	18	9
Connecticut	70	7
Massachusetts	55	6
Kentucky	15	5
New York	71	5
Oregon	15	5
Wyoming	14	5
New Hampshire	5	4
South Carolina	8	4
Arizona	7	3
Arkansas	18	3
California	50	3
Illinois	45	3
New Jersey	18	3
Louisiana	3	2
Michigan	15	2
Mississippi	15	2
Nebraska	7	2
Ohio	18	3
Oklahoma	15	2
Rhode Island	1	2
Vermont	2	2
West Virginia	3	2
North Dakota	4	1
Pennsylvania	7	1
Washington	3	0.8
Colorado	2	0.8
Idaho	1	0.7
Missouri	6	0.7
Indiana	2	0.4
Minnesota	2	0.4
Iowa	1	0.2
Maine	1	0.05

Note: The following states have no women superintendents or assistant superintendents: Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, S. Dakota, Wisconsin. Four states did not report: Maryland, Nevada, Virginia and Georgia.

Source: Education Commission of the States, loc. cit.

in men came a gradual up-grading of salaries for teachers. Men seeking higher wages may have looked to administration for higher salaries.

At this point social and institutional attitudes including sex role stereotyping led to a greater and more rapid increase in the number of men in leadership positions.<sup>1</sup> The stereotypic role of the men as leader, breadwinner, decision maker and disciplinarian, coupled with attitudes about women's capabilities and their appropriate role, reinforced the idea that male and leader were synonymous. Such expectations were present on the part of both men and women.

Some commonly held attitudes about women in the field of work and other feelings toward women managers are dealt with in much of the literature.

Attitude One: Man is the breadwinner, and woman is the housekeeper. (Women work for a second income.)<sup>2</sup>

In reality over 42 percent of the women workers in the United States are single. At least 50 percent work because of economic need. They are single, widowed, divorced or their husbands make less than \$7,000 a year.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Louise Bach, "Of Women, School Administration, and Discipline," Phi Delta Kappan, LVII, No. 7 (March, 1976), 464.

<sup>2</sup>AASA, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Attitude Two: Women don't work as long. Investing in training is a waste of money.<sup>1</sup>

Statistics show the work life expectancy of a man in 1975 was forty-three years. The work life of the married woman was twenty-five years. The work life of the single woman was forty-five years.<sup>2</sup>

Attitude Three: Women shouldn't compete for men's jobs.

Research shows that job requirements are less related to differences in sex than differences in people.<sup>3</sup>

Attitude Four: Men don't like to work for women.<sup>4</sup>

Surveys indicate that men and women who say they would not work for a woman have never done so. In her 1974 study in the Des Moines' schools, Prior found that attitudes toward women administrators were no different than attitudes toward men in those positions.<sup>5</sup>

Attitude Five: Women are not competent or effective in leadership roles.<sup>6</sup>

Meskin and others have shown this is not substantiated by fact. In more than one study women were found to be equally competent in the various elements of leadership skills and were rated higher in sensitivity to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

individual needs and democratic leadership.<sup>1</sup>

Attitude Six: Men are committed to teaching as a career, women consider it only temporary.

According to NEA reports in the last ten years the number of women who had at least one break in service had dropped from one half to one third.<sup>2</sup> The passage of laws making illegal the forced resignation for pregnancy and legalizing sick leave for pregnancy have probably had something to do with this. Only in the last five years have women been allowed to work almost the full term of their pregnancy and been allowed to return to their job as soon as physically able. The interrupted career pattern seems to be partly a product of discrimination. This pattern could indeed slow down the possible promotion of women should they choose to interrupt their careers for child rearing, yet the literature indicates that men advance with less experience than women.<sup>3</sup>

Economic pressures for increase in the working force have been identified as reasons for the increase of women

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<sup>1</sup>John D. Meskin, The Performance of Women School Administrators--A Review of the Literature, Administrative Handbook Series, XIII, No. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Suzanne Howard, Why Aren't Women Administering the Schools? (Washington, D.C.: National Council of Administrative Women in Education, 1975), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

in many non-traditional fields. Yet the field where women were the primary source of labor for many years, education, has shown the opposite trend in terms of percentage of women entering the profession. The reasons for this seeming reversal could be the results of attitudes and values that are held by men and women. Many of the attitudes described above are firmly established in the minds of women as well as men. Such attitudes and internal pressures have also possibly contributed to the decline of women in leadership positions.

Several writers address themselves to sex discrimination as an internal pressure, and sex role stereotyping as one of the primary reasons why women do not aspire to leadership positions. In the words of Louise Bach, "The image of the dependent female haunts us all."<sup>1</sup> Bach visualizes the female image as one of a malfunctioning adult. Standard traits of males are dominance, achievement, autonomy, and aggression. Females are timid, emotional and self-abasing. These female traits do not sound like attributes of a leader.<sup>2</sup>

Keehan describes the image of woman as emotional, unable to accept responsibility, unwilling to take risks and

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<sup>1</sup>Bach, op. cit., p. 464.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



not willing to give the time it takes to succeed.<sup>1</sup> The inferior image of woman as lacking qualities for leadership may be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In order for a woman to aspire to a role or position she must feel or believe that she has the capabilities to achieve it. A study by Burlin suggests "that young women desire to pursue a broader range of occupations, but that personal and social forces limit their belief that in real life these occupations could actually be pursued."<sup>2</sup> Burlin also states that it is sex role ideology that limits the occupational aspirations of many female adolescents.<sup>3</sup>

Lack of role models is another factor. If women do not see successful women in administrative roles their experience tells them that this is a job women cannot do. Neidig points out the fact that "students who never see women in positions of leadership are not likely to believe that female aspirations should transcend traditional roles."<sup>4</sup> The message to young women is clear--don't aspire too high.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Virginia Keehan and Alice Thurston, "The Woman's View from the Top," Community and Junior College Journal, December/January, 1976, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Francis-Dee Burlin, "Locus of Control and Female Occupational Aspiration," Journal of Counseling Psychology, XXIII, No. 2 (1976), 128.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>4</sup>Neidig, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>5</sup>AASA, op. cit., p. 9.

The Successful Woman Administrator

Once women reach top level leadership positions how do they view the present system and any problems that women might face?

Collins found that some women superintendents felt that "most boards are presumed to screen out female administrative applicants from the running and most females know it. Their advice: 'Use only your initials when you apply--unless your first name is Sam.'"<sup>1</sup>

Other top level women administrators commented on the importance of those in power positions being influenced by stereotypic points of view. Keehan states, "There is no way that a woman can be named to a key administrative position unless the men who are selecting a candidate for a particular position are secure in their own jobs, have confidence in their own judgment and have a commitment to utilize all resources and talents."<sup>2</sup>

The security needed to select women for managerial positions appears to be difficult to achieve. A study by Garland and Price examined attitudinal changes in regard to the success of women in management positions. They found that even when confronted by a successful woman manager

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<sup>1</sup>Collins, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Keehan and Thurston, loc. cit.

those with a bias against women in management positions found it easy to assimilate that experience and maintain the bias.<sup>1</sup> Those participating in the study who had a positive bias toward women managers tended to attribute their success to ability and hard work. Good luck and an easy job were associated with successful women by participants who had a bias against women managers.<sup>2</sup>

Garland and Price saw as one implication of their study the idea that "bias against women in management may not only operate against a female at the beginning of her career, in the absence of clear performance data, but also when she is well into her career and may have established a superior record."<sup>3</sup>

Showing extreme competence does not appear to carry over. As Alice Thurston, President of Los Angeles Valley College puts it, "I am becoming disenchanted with the excitement a woman president seems to arouse because it indicates that a woman professional is not accepted on the same basis as a man in the same role."<sup>4</sup> The typical reaction to a woman in an administrative position is "how unusual"

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<sup>1</sup>Howard Garland and Kenneth H. Price, "Attitudes Toward Women in Management and Attributions for their Success and Failure in a Managerial Position," Journal of Applied Psychology, LXII (1977), 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Keehan and Thurston, op. cit., p. 19.

or how nice for you. Aren't you lucky. The possibility that the woman had earned the position does not seem to be considered in some cases.

For this reason many women feel the pressure to try even harder than their male competitors and colleagues. Some of those superintendents interviewed by Lorraine Collins shared the views of Keehan who states, "It has been my experience that women are expected to have more credentials and to work harder than men."<sup>1</sup>

Some feel that the same qualities that make a good male administrator and leader are to be found in a good female administrator. Professional competency, commitment to the job and to the people with whom you work is essential.<sup>2</sup> Male and female administrators need to use mature judgment in decision making, have a rational philosophy, be consistent, poised, tolerant and able to communicate with their staff.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time that capability is stressed as the number one quality, there are others insisting again that the woman administrator must have more.

The woman administrator must have the cooperation of husband and children if she is married. Motivation to succeed, perseverance, a sense of humor and a sense of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Zakrajsek, op. cit., p. 95.

proportion were also stressed.<sup>1</sup> A willingness to run personal risks and to take the consequence for decisions is often emphasized. A woman administrator must be willing to fail.<sup>2</sup> She must show a record of stability and consistent service.<sup>3</sup> Many of these traits seem to combat the stereotypic view of the indecisive, timid, emotional and flighty female. Men also need these skills but do not seem to have to contend with this image.

There are other more specific suggestions for women desiring to become administrators. Thurston advises, "get experience, be sure there is no conflict between the position and your personal needs, be in the right place at the right time."<sup>4</sup> Neidig says, "trust in your own abilities, understand the socialization process including the potential threat men may feel."<sup>5</sup> A doctoral program, a job that gives visibility, writing, and participation in national associations are also advised.

The message is clear. Be prepared. Also be prepared to meet with some obstacles and problems. Although some women say they have not experienced discrimination,

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<sup>1</sup>Neidig, loc. cit.      <sup>2</sup>Keehan and Thurston, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Zakrajsek, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>Keehan and Thurston, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>Neidig, op. cit., p. 54.

several writers address themselves to the special problems women administrators face. Smith cites "resentment from men and women, one's own feeling of inferiority, being reminded when one makes a mistake 'what more can you expect from a woman', and facing a great deal of frustration."<sup>1</sup>

Combining a career and marriage offer special problems for the woman administrator.<sup>2</sup> The need for mobility brings to bear again the necessity for cooperation from one's spouse. Such cooperation is something that school boards seem concerned with in determining the women administrators qualifications. A board interviewing a prospective woman superintendent may well be asking "if her husband would mind if she didn't have time to prepare his breakfast, plus a lot of other things that are not their business--questions they wouldn't ask a man."<sup>3</sup>

### Training and Preparation

Because of the special challenges for women seeking administrative positions, there is evidence that women training for administration need additional training and preparation.

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<sup>1</sup>Rosa A. Smith, "Women Administrators--Is the Price Too High?" NASSP Bulletin, LX, No. 399 (April, 1976), 101-102.

<sup>2</sup>Collins, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Paula Silver found, in a study of qualifications of women for educational leadership, that the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles is not warranted on the basis of lack of preservice or formal preparation.<sup>1</sup> McCarthy and Webb were more explicit in the kinds of training women need. According to these writers, assertiveness training is needed to prepare women to be tolerant and sensitive to the men and women on their staffs. They also need help in dealing with the fraternal network of traditional forums (golf games, poker parties, and locker rooms) where important decisions are made.<sup>2</sup>

All women administrators must understand the "buddy system" which exists and the informal male social structure that grooms young men for management positions. The politics of the protégé seem to be a definite factor in the attainment of administrative positions. "Crucial decisions are often made in informal settings such as handball courts, locker rooms, or Rotary luncheons...Male administrators have the opportunity to learn professional etiquette and be groomed for promotions. Women are left out traditionally."<sup>3</sup> Women need to develop ways to break into this

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<sup>1</sup>Paula F. Silver, "Are Women Underqualified for Leadership?" Phi Delta Kappan, November, 1977, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup>McCarthy and Webb, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

system and use it knowledgeably.

### Summary

Two major strands continue to appear and reappear in the literature regarding the decreasing number of women in educational administration--the limited self-image of women and the stereotypic attitudes of women and men. More empirical evidence needs to be gathered and disseminated to substantiate the capabilities of women and to bring to light the underlying causes of their gradual exclusion from leadership in our schools. The literature appears to indicate that this decline is not due to any one factor, but many contributing and interrelated ones.



## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### The Instrument

A questionnaire was designed to collect data on the personal and job related characteristics of men and women currently serving as superintendents in the public schools and on the perceptions of the positive and negative factors identified in the literature as relating to attainment of the position of superintendent. A sample questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

Questions were developed after study of several similar questionnaires used in previous research. Primary sources were questionnaires developed by Bradley, Zimmerman, Smith, and Brooks.<sup>1</sup> An instrument for field

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<sup>1</sup>Nancy L. Bradley, "A Profile of Women Who are Employed as Elementary Principals in Iowa's Public Schools During the 1977-78 School Year" (Masters thesis, University of Minnesota, 1978), pp. 31-35; Jeannine Zimmerman, "The Status of Women in Educational Administrative Positions within Central Offices of Public Schools" (EdD dissertation, Temple University, 1971), p. 39; Judith Ann Smith, "A Study of Women who are Certified and Employed as Principals in Pennsylvania" (EdD dissertation, Temple University, 1977), p. 54; Barbara Jean Roberts Brooks, "A Profile of Black Females in Selected Administrative Positions in Public School Systems in Florida" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1975), p. 45.

testing was prepared and mailed to the following superintendents for written critique.

Donald W. Muller  
North Fayette County Community Schools  
West Union, Iowa 52175

Dr. David Holmes  
Minona Community Schools  
Moorehead, Iowa 51558

Dr. Kenneth Malice  
Corning Community Schools  
Corning, Iowa 50841

Dr. Larry Beard  
Hudson Community School District  
Hudson, Iowa 50643

Mr. Robert Glasford  
N.W. Webster Community School District  
Barnum, Iowa 50518

Mr. Keith D. Hopkins and  
Mr. Benjamin Norman  
Ankeny Community Schools  
Ankeny, Iowa

Two personal interviews were held with local area superintendents to discuss the questionnaire. Interviews were held with

Dr. Dwight Davis  
Des Moines Independent School District  
1800 Grand  
Des Moines, Iowa 50307

Dr. Dale Grabinski  
West Des Moines Community Schools  
West Des Moines, Iowa 50265

These consultants also reviewed and offered suggestions for questionnaire revision.

Mr. George Garcia  
Urban Education Division  
Iowa Department of Public Instruction  
Des Moines, Iowa

Ms. Julie Slick  
Non-Sexist Curriculum Consultant  
Iowa Department of Public Instruction  
Des Moines, Iowa

Mr. John Tompkins  
Evaluation Consultant  
Des Moines Public Schools  
Des Moines, Iowa

Dr. Howard Ebmier  
Program Evaluator  
Des Moines Public Schools  
Des Moines, Iowa

Mr. Jeffery Grimes  
Consultant, School Psychological Services  
Department of Public Instruction  
Des Moines, Iowa

Following the field testing and critique, the instrument was refined to consist of thirty-five items. Fifteen of these items dealt with statistical information such as age, experience, salary and size of district in which the respondent served. Items sixteen through thirty-five were comprised of identified factors to be rated on a five-point scale consisting of: (1) greatly hindered; (2) slightly hindered; (3) no effect; (4) slightly helped; (5) greatly helped.

### Population

The population sampled was male and female superintendents of public schools in the United States. The source of the names and addresses of the population was the American Association of School Administrators, Arlington, Virginia. Contact with Mrs. Mary R. Moncure, Director of the Membership Division and Christine Oswald, Computer Coordinator indicated that mailing labels were available for the approximately 16,000 superintendents in the United States. This appeared to be all, if not an extremely high percent, of the total number of superintendents in the country. AASA identified 511 women superintendents of the total 16,000. All 511 of these names were obtained by the researcher. A random sample of 125 of these 511 was obtained using a table of random numbers. The labels were grouped by the AASA computer according to geographic area on label mounts. The random names were selected by first numbering the labels consecutively and then randomly selecting the names using a table of random numbers.

A complete list of all those to whom questionnaires were sent was recorded and each questionnaire was coded to allow for follow-up contact.

The AASA did not have a computer program to provide a random sampling of the approximately 15,000 remaining

male administrators. They sent instead every tenth entry on the total mailing list for a total of 1,422 name labels. A random sample of these 1,422 labels was taken using the same procedure as described for that of the female sample.

Each label was numbered consecutively as it appeared on the label mounts. A random selection using a table of random numbers was made to select a total of 150 of the 1,422 male names provided. These names were also recorded and questionnaires coded for follow-up contact.

The female administrators identified by this method appear to be a valid random sample. The male administrators were selected randomly from the list provided by the AASA. Study of both samples of names reveals nationwide representation of both men and women with forty-five of the fifty states represented.

The questionnaires were mailed on January 4, 1979. The cover letter (see Appendix A) requested return in a self-addressed stamped envelope by January 15. A total of 112 of the 150 questionnaires sent to males were returned. All 112 questionnaires were useable. Thirty-eight questionnaires were not returned by males. A total of seventy-eight of the 125 questionnaires sent to females were returned. Of these thirty-nine were useable. Twenty-two of these were returned by men. Thirteen of these were considered useable and were added to the total male sample to make 126.

Forty-seven of the female questionnaires were not returned and seventeen were invalid for other reasons. To determine whether or not a second mailing to the women would be productive, a random sample of the forty-seven females who did not respond was made and seven long distance phone calls were completed. Two of the women contacted were not superintendents, but building administrators in small schools. One call uncovered the fact that the name on the mailing list was that of a man even though the computer had identified him as a female. One call resulted in contact with a county superintendent who was in a state department position. The final three calls were to districts where women no longer held the superintendent's position.

Given the evidence uncovered by the seven phone calls the researcher decided that the thirty-nine useable questionnaires were sufficient to continue the study and that additional mailings to more of the remaining 400 females on the list would not improve the sampling.

Evidence that the mailing list was accurate in terms of male superintendents was the high rate of return, 112 of 150, with no inaccurate questionnaires among those returned by males. Following the results of the mailing and phone calls it was decided to use all thirty-nine useable female questionnaires and all useable male questionnaires which amounted to 126.

### Treatment of the Data

Responses to the questionnaire were compiled for items one through sixteen. A frequency distribution for males which included the number and percent for each category of response in each item was compiled. Frequencies and percentages of responses were also compiled for females and for the two groups combined.

The factors, items sixteen through thirty-five, perceived by respondents as influencing the attainment of the position of superintendent were ranked on a five-point scale. The means for each item (sixteen through thirty-five) were computed for males and females. Then t-tests were computed to test for differences between male and female responses on each factor.

Items sixteen through thirty-five, the factors perceived by respondents as influencing the attainment of the position of superintendent, were ranked on the basis of mean responses for males and mean responses for females from the greatest hinderance to greatest help to determine similarities in ranking of both groups. A Spearman Rho Correlation was computed to test for the relationship between men's and women's relative perceptions of the factors in terms of how they ranked them.

The data from items sixteen through thirty-five was analyzed to test two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between women's and men's reported perceptions of the relative effects of the various factors as they pertain to the attainment of the superintendency. (Spearman Rho)

Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in women's and men's reported perceptions of each identified factor's effect on the attainment of the superintendency.  
(t-tests)

Each hypothesis was rejected if the statistical test resulted in a value which would occur by chance less than 5 percent of the time.



## Chapter 4

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the data derived from the thirty-five item questionnaire described in Chapter 3 and the researcher's analysis of those data.

#### Report of Findings

##### Personal and Job Related Characteristics

The first fifteen items of the questionnaire deal with personal and job related characteristics of superintendents. Item one identified the sex of the respondents. Tables 2 through 15 describe the frequency and percent of each response to each item on the questionnaire for women and for men.

Table 2 concerns the age of respondents. It is notable that a higher percentage of men than women are of thirty-five years of age or less. A higher percentage of women were over thirty-five.

Table 3 indicates the racial ethnic origins of the respondents. A high percentage of both men and women superintendents surveyed were white. Four percent of the men and 12.9 percent of the women were minority members.

Table 2

## Age of Public School Superintendents in the United States

Questionnaire Item 2: Age	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Under 26	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
26-35	13	10.3	4	10.3
36-45	44	34.9	10	25.6
46-55	55	43.7	16	41.0
56-65	13	10.3	9	23.1
66+	1	0.8	0	0.0

Table 3

Racial-Ethnic Origins of Public School Superintendents  
in the United States

Questionnaire Item 3: Racial Ethnic	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
American Indian/ Alaskan	2	1.6%	1	2.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hispanic	0	0.0	0	0.0
Black	3	2.4	4	10.3
White	119	94.2	32	82.1
Blank	2	1.6	Missing	

Table 4 indicates the marital status of the superintendents. It is notable that a very high percentage of men were married. One third of the women were single, widowed, divorced or separated.

Table 4  
Marital Status of Public School Superintendents  
in the United States

Questionnaire Item 4: Marital Status	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Single	3	2.4%	6	15.4%
Married	122	96.8	25	64.1
Widow/Widower	0	0.0	4	10.3
Divorced/Separated	1	0.8	3	7.7
Other			1	2.6

Table 5 indicates the number of children of the superintendents. Overall, women had fewer children than did men.

Table 6 indicates the highest degree held by the superintendents. The highest degree held by about one fourth of the women was a bachelor's degree. Over 95 percent of the men held a masters degree or higher. More men than women held doctor's degrees.

Table 7 indicates the major field of the highest degree held by superintendents. Almost 90 percent of the

Table 5

Number of Children of Public School Superintendents  
in the United States

Questionnaire Item 5: Children	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	9	7.1%	8	20.5%
2	45	35.7	12	30.8
3	38	30.2	5	12.8
4	11	8.7	3	7.7
5 or more	13	10.3	2	5.1
None	10	7.9	9	23.1

Table 6

Highest Degree held by Public School Superintendents  
in the United States

Questionnaire Item 6: Highest Degree Held	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Bachelors	3	2.4%	10	25.6%
Masters	61	48.4	16	41.0
Specialist	25	19.8	5	12.8
Doctors	33	26.2	6	15.4
Others	4	3.2	1	2.6

men held their highest degree in school administration. Over 25 percent of the women held degrees in other areas.

Table 7

Major Field of Highest Degree of Public School  
Superintendents in the United States

Questionnaire Item 7: Major/ Highest Degree Held	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
School Administration	113	89.7%	27	69.2%
Curriculum/Planning	5	4.0	2	5.1
Business/Public Administration	1	0.8	3	7.7
Other Professional	1	0.8	1	2.6
Other	6	4.8	4	10.3
			2	Blank

Table 8 describes the years of experience of superintendents at their first administrative appointment. It is notable that almost 20 percent of the men had three years or less experience before their first appointment. Over 50 percent of the men received their first appointment with six years of experience or less. A little over 20 percent of the women were in this category.

Table 9 indicates the age of superintendents at the time of their first administrative appointment. Over 40 percent of the men received their first administrative appointment before they were thirty years old. Less than

Table 8

Years of Experience at First Administrative Appointment  
of Public School Superintendents in the United States

Questionnaire Item 8: Experience Before First Appointment	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
0-3 years	24	19.0%	1	2.6%
4-6 years	45	35.7	8	20.5
7-10 years	35	27.8	13	33.3
11-14 years	12	9.5	6	15.4
15-19 years	9	7.1	5	12.8
20+ years	1	0.8	6	15.4

Table 9

Age at First Administrative Appointment of Public School  
Superintendents in the United States

Questionnaire Item 9: Age at First Appointment	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Under 30	54	42.9%	7	17.9%
30-35	42	33.3	14	35.9
36-40	19	15.1	5	12.8
41-45	7	5.6	7	17.9
46-50	4	3.2	3	7.7
51+	0	0.0	3	7.7

20 percent of the women were under thirty. Women were older when appointed than were the men.

Table 10 indicates positions held prior to appointment of the respondent to the superintendency. A high percentage of men and women were teachers prior to becoming superintendent.

Table 10

Type of Positions held Immediately Prior to Superintendency of Public School Superintendents in the United States

Questionnaire Item 10: Positions Prior to Superintendency	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Teacher/Elementary Secondary	111	88.1%	37	96.9%
Vice/Assistant Principal	3	2.4	2	5.1
Principal: Secondary	6	4.8	--	--
Principal: Elementary	2	1.6	--	--
Asst. Superintendent	2	1.6	--	--

Table 11 presented the number of years in their present position of superintendents surveyed. The highest percentage of women held their present position for from three to six years.

Table 12 describes the length of the longest superintendency held by the respondents. A higher percentage of men than women had superintendencies for ten years or more.

Table 11

Number of Years in Present Position of Public School  
Superintendents in the United States

Questionnaire Item 11: Number of Years in Present Position				
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	13	10.3%	1	2.6%
1-3 years	33	26.2	13	33.3
3-6 years	34	27.0	16	41.0
7-9 years	20	15.9	5	12.8
10 or more years	26	20.6	4	10.3

Table 12

Length of Longest Superintendency Held by Public School  
Superintendents in the United States

Questionnaire Item 12: Length of Longest Superintendency				
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1-3 years	34	27.0%	14	35.9%
4-6 years	39	31.0	13	33.3
7-9 years	17	13.5	4	10.3
10+ years	27	21.4	4	10.3
None of the above	2	1.6		
Blank	7	5.6		



Table 13 describes the number of superintendencies held by men and women respondents. A higher percentage of women than men held only one superintendency. Over 37 percent of the men had held two or more superintendencies.

Table 13

Number of Superintendencies Held by Public School  
Superintendents in the United States

Questionnaire Item 13: Number of Superin- tendencies Held	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	78	61.9%	34	87.2%
2	25	19.8	1	2.6
3	12	9.5	1	2.6
4	6	4.8	1	2.6
5	1	0.8		
6	3	2.4		
Blank	1	0.8		

Table 14 describes the present salary range of the superintendents. Women made less money than men. The median salary for men was \$27,300 while the median salary for women was \$23,200.

Table 15 describes the size of district by pupil enrollment of the superintendents surveyed. Over 50 percent of the men were employed in districts of 1000 or more,

Table 14

Salary Ranges of Public School Superintendents  
in the United States

Questionnaire Item 14: Salaries	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$20,000	15	11.9%	16	41.0%
\$20,000-\$25,000	33	26.2	7	17.9
\$25,001-\$30,000	32	35.4	8	20.5
\$30,001-\$35,000	24	19.0	4	10.3
\$35,001-\$40,000	11	8.7	3	7.7
\$40,001-\$45,000	7	5.6	1	2.6
\$45,001-\$50,000	3	2.4	0	0.0
\$50,000+	1	0.8	0	0.0

Table 15

Size of District in Number of Pupils Where Public School  
Superintendents in the United States  
are Employed

Questionnaire Item 15: Size of District	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
25,000 or more	3	2.4%	1	2.4%
10,000-24,999	4	3.2	4	10.3
5,000-9,999	7	5.6	2	5.1
3,000-4,999	11	8.7	3	7.7
1,000-2,999	40	31.7	5	12.8
600-999	20	15.9	6	15.4
300-599	22	17.5	7	17.9
299 or less	17	13.5	11	28.2

while almost 38 percent of the women were employed in similar sized districts. It is also notable that 12 percent of the women were in districts of 10,000 or more.

Factors Perceived as Helping or Hindering the  
Attainment of the Position of Superintendent

Items sixteen through thirty-five on the questionnaire were a list of twenty factors drawn from that literature that might influence the attainment of the position of superintendent (see Table 16). The respondents were to rate each factor on a scale from one (greatly hindered) to five (greatly helped). The mean responses for men and women were computed. The data were analyzed to test two hypotheses as follows.

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between women's and men's reported perceptions of the relative effects of the various helping/hindering factors as they pertain to the attainment of the superintendent.

As seen in Table 16, the Spearman Rho for the rank orders of the mean ratings is .824. This is significant beyond the .05 level; thus the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in women's and men's perceptions of each identified helping/hindering factors effect on the attainment of the superintendency.

Table 16

Mean Ratings by Sex of Factors Perceived as Helping or Hindering in  
 Securing Superintendency with Ranks of Mean Ratings and t Values  
 for Differences Between Means (Females Minus Males)  
 1.000=Greatest Hinderance to 5.000=Greatest Help

Factor Number	Female		Male		t-Value
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	
33 Being a man or a woman.	2.821	1	3.426	5	-4.60*
17 High percent of males in administration	3.0821	2	3.427	6	-2.50*
32 Religious affiliation	3.132	3	3.224	3	-.98
21 Affirmative action	3.171	4	3.057	1	1.59
24 Change in geogr. location	3.243	5	3.206	2	.31
19 College/Univ. placement	3.282	6	3.667	9	-2.77*
30 Marital status	3.333	7.5	3.568	8	-1.81
31 Physical strength	3.333	7.5	3.339	4	-.05
23 Home and family responsibilities	3.513	9	3.784	12	-1.68
34 Recruitment procedures	3.541	10	3.560	7	-.13
18 Support of college personnel	3.579	11	3.810	13	-1.51
25 Political atmosphere	3.692	12	3.763	10	-.41
27 Personal appearance	3.811	13	3.848	14	-.29
20 District selection process	3.892	14	4.168	17	-1.57
35 Support of family and spouse	3.897	15	3.768	11	.78
29 Expectations of community involvement	4.105	16	4.024	16	.52
22 School Board attitudes	4.132	17	4.484	18	-2.29*

Table 16 (continued)

Factor Number	Female		Male		t-Value
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	
16 Level of support of District administration	4.171	18	4.000	15	.95
26 Personal education philosophy	4.429	19	4.612	19	-1.44
28 Previous work experience	4.769	20	4.640	20	1.36

\*p&lt;.05

=.824

This hypothesis was retained in sixteen of the twenty factors rated by the respondents. A t-test was computed to determine similarities or differences in the means of each of the two groups (men and women). On only four factors was a difference significant at the .05 level found. These four factors are identified by asterisks in Table 16. Tables 17 through 20 describe each factor and the percentages and frequencies of responses to the five choices.

Table 17 describes the respondent's rating of the factor "Being a man or a woman." It is notable that over 30 percent of the men saw "being a man" of slight or great help. Only 13 percent of the women saw "being a woman" as great or slight help.

Table 17

Ratings of Public School Superintendents in the  
United States of Helping/Hindering Factor  
Being a Man or a Woman

Item 33: Being a man or a woman	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Greatly Hindered	0	0.0%	3	7.7%
Slightly Hindered	2	1.6	7	17.9
No Effect	77	61.1	24	61.5
Slightly Helped	32	25.4	5	10.3
Greatly Helped	11	8.7	1	2.6

Table 18 describes the respondent's rating of the factor "High percentage of men in administration." More than 30 percent of the men but less than 16 percent of the women saw this factor of great or slight help in obtaining the position of superintendent.

Table 18

Ratings of Public School Superintendents in the  
United States of Helping/Hindering Factor High  
Percentage of Men in Administration

Item 17: High Percentage of Men in Administration	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Greatly Hindered	0	0.0%	2	5.1%
Slightly Hindered	1	0.8	3	7.7
No Effect	82	65.1	26	66.7
Slightly Helped	28	22.2	2	5.1
Greatly Helped	13	10.3	4	10.3
Blank	2	1.6	2	1.6

Table 19 describes the respondent's rating of the helping/hindering factor "College and university placement services." A very high percent of the men found the assistance of college and university placement services of great or slight help. Although women did not see this as a help, they saw it as having no effect or of some hinderance.



Table 19

Ratings of Public School Superintendents in the  
United States of Helping/Hindering Factor  
College and University Placement Services

Item 19: College and University Placement Services	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Greatly Hindered	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Slightly Hindered	0	0.0	0	0.0
No Effect	65	51.6	32	82.7
Slightly Helped	34	27.0	3	7.7
Greatly Helped	24	19.0	3	7.7
Blank	3			

Table 20 describes the respondents rating of the factor "School board attitudes, opinions and philosophy." A higher percentage of men saw this as of slight or great help. A significant percentage of women saw it as having no effect or as being a hinderance.

Only one factor, "Being a man or a woman," was rated below 3.00 when means are considered. This is the rating for "no effect."

Rating by men and women of the sixteen other factors did not differ significantly.

Table 20

Ratings of Public School Superintendents in the  
United States of Helping/Hindering Factor  
School Board Attitudes, Opinions and  
Philosophy

Item 22: School Board Attitudes, Opinions and Philosophy	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Greatly Hindered	0	0.0%	2	5.1%
Slightly Hindered	2	1.6	1	2.6
No Effect	9	7.1	8	20.5
Slightly Helped	41	32.5	6	15.4
Greatly Helped	74	58.7	21	53.8
Blank			2	2.6

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the research findings, discussion of the findings and conclusions and recommendations are included in this chapter.

#### Summary of the Investigation

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions.

1. What, if any, common personal and/or job related characteristics exist among men and women superintendents in the United States?
2. What, if any, similarities or differences in personal and/or job related characteristics exist between men and women in superintendencies in public schools in the United States?
3. What helping/hindering factors identified in the current literature are perceived by women and men as helping or hindering the attainment of the position?

## Summary of Findings

### Personal and Job Related Characteristics

The questionnaire developed for this study was designed to identify personal and job related characteristics of men and women serving as superintendents. The descriptive data gathered in items one through fifteen showed both similarities and differences. The data has been summarized into three profiles. Profile One is based on combined male and female responses (percentages). Profile Two describes the woman superintendent based on percentages of female responses. Profile Three is a description of the man superintendent based on male responses.

Profile One: The Superintendent. The superintendent is between the ages of 46 and 55. He or she is white and married with two or more children. The superintendent holds his or her highest degree in School Administration and this is a Masters degree or higher. He or she had six years or less experience as a teacher before the first administrative appointment which was received before the age of thirty-four. About one in three of these superintendents have been at their present position three years or less and about two thirds have held their longest superintendency for six years or less. More than two thirds of the superintendents have held only one superintendency. The superintendent earned \$25,000 or less and served in a

district with 1000 pupils or less.

Profile Two: The Woman Superintendent. The woman superintendent is between the ages of 46 and 55. She is white and married with one or no children. The woman superintendent held her highest degree, a Masters, in School Administration. She had four to ten years of experience as a teacher before her first administrative appointment which she received before the age of thirty-five. She has been in her present position from three to six years. She has held one superintendency and her income is \$23,200 in a district of 600 or less.

Profile Three: The Man Superintendent. The man superintendent is between the ages of 46 and 55. He is white and married with three or more children. The male superintendent holds his highest degree, a Masters, in School Administration. He had less than three to six years of experience as a teacher before his first administrative appointment which he received before the age of thirty. He has been in his present superintendency for six years or less and the longest superintendency he has held is between four and six years. He has held one superintendency and his salary is \$27,300 in a district that ranges in size from 999 to 2999.

A comparison of these three composites shows the nature of these similarities and differences. The age of

the majority of men and women superintendents was similar. The highest degree held was the same, as was the race of those surveyed. Most of the superintendents had previous experience as teachers. Fewer women than men were married. Women had fewer children. Men received administrative appointments at a younger age than did women. Women had more experience prior to the appointment. Men were appointed at a younger age. More women than men had held just one superintendency. Women earned less money and served as superintendents in smaller districts as well as in larger districts.

#### Helping/Hindering Factors

The data gathered in items sixteen through thirty-five were analyzed to retain or reject two hypotheses about factors that helped or hindered men and women superintendents. The hypothesis that there was no relationship between the perceptions of men and women of the relative effects of the various helping/hindering factors as they pertain to the attainment of the superintendency was rejected. The Spearman Rho showed a value of .824 when the rankings of the means of the ratings of factors by men and women were correlated. This is significant beyond the .05 level.

The hypothesis that there is no difference in men's and women's perceptions of each identified helping/hindering factor was retained for sixteen factors and rejected for four factors. The t-tests showed that there was a

significant difference between means in four items: "Being a man or a woman;" "College and university placement services;" "High percentage of males in administrative positions;" and "School board attitudes, opinions and philosophy." A difference was noted in these items at the .05 level of significance. In the case of each factor the men saw it as more helpful than did the women.

### Discussion of Findings as They Relate to the Literature

#### Personal and Job Related Characteristics

Caution is suggested in interpretation of the characteristics of the sample to the total population. However, the data accumulated support some of the research and speculation recorded in the review of literature. There is a small percentage of women in the superintendency. When the researcher sought to identify the sample of women in superintendent positions the evidence seemed to indicate there are probably fewer than 250 women in the country who are currently serving as superintendents. The literature also indicated women need to have more experience and wait longer to be appointed to administrative positions. The data supported this speculation.

Women administrators are appointed at an older age. Gray hair and thick waistlines were mentioned by one woman superintendent in the review of literature. Data supports the observations that men are appointed earlier in their

careers and are younger at the time of this appointment.

The suggestion by some that women had to be more qualified for the job was not supported by this study. A higher percentage of women held only bachelors degrees, but had ten or more years experience before their first appointment. Extended experience might have been a factor considered instead of higher degree.

Many sources pointed out the possibility that home and family responsibilities make it more difficult for women administrators. Although this study does not deal with this speculation, it is possible that marriage and family are factors to be considered. About one third of the women surveyed were single. In ranking marital status as a helping or hindering factor, men and women ranked it about the same. A clearer idea of the influence of this factor might have been obtained if the respondents had been asked to rank being married or being single as a help or a hinderance.

#### Helping and Hindering Factors

Items sixteen through thirty-five were developed by reading the literature. The researcher judged these factors might influence the attainment of the position of superintendent. Means of both men's and women's responses as well as means of the total group show that few men or women viewed many of the factors as a great or slight hinderance to obtaining the position. Most means were



above 3.00 which seems to indicate factors either had no effect or were seen to have a positive effect. Perhaps the literature is attributing more negative effects to these factors than is warranted. It should be remembered, however, that those surveyed have already achieved the superintendency.

Rankings of the factors revealed a high correlation between the way men and women perceived the factors. The four factors that were perceived differently could be interpreted as giving evidence of sex discrimination. Women ranked the factor which most hindered their obtaining the position "Being a man or a woman." A high percent of the men indicated that "being a man" was of slight or great help to them in obtaining the position. The same was true of the factor "High percentage of males in administration." Women rated it as a hinderance or having no effect. More men rated this as a help. This data supports contentions in the literature that the "buddy system" makes promotion more difficult for women. It also relates to lack of role models for women.

The two other factors which were rated differently by men and women were also alluded to in the literature. The support of college and university placement services was not seen as particularly effective by women writing in this field. The buddy system may also be functioning in this setting.

Women superintendents interviewed in the literature mentioned specifically the importance of the attitudes of school board members. This study supports their contention that the attitudes and opinions of school boards are important in obtaining the position. Men saw school board attitudes of greater help than did women in getting their positions.

### Conclusions

The leading question posed by this study centered on the reasons behind the decline in the number and percentage of women in administrative positions in education. The data accumulated by this study have led to the following conclusions:

First, men and women superintendents have similar personal and job related characteristics. Women, however, are older when appointed and have more work experience. A higher percentage of the top women managers or superintendents are single. Women superintendents work in smaller school districts and earn lower salaries.

Second, men and women perceive their gender to be a factor in helping or hindering them in the attainment of the position. Men felt it to be a help. Women saw it as no help, or a hinderance.

Third, no one factor stands out as the primary reason why the number and percentage of women administrators

continues to decline.

### Recommendations

Many questions still remain unanswered. How many women are applying for the position of superintendent? How do school boards perceive the female applicant? Is discipline or the ability to discipline a factor in keeping women from administrative positions? How great a part does attitude and sex role-stereotyping play in limiting the number of women administrators?

According to Gretchen Niedermayer, 20 percent of the doctorates in education in the United States in 1974 went to women and 13 percent of these were in school administration.<sup>1</sup> How many qualified women hold administrative credentials, but are not employed as administrators?

Other studies in this area could focus on the attitudes of school boards, the procedures of placement services, statistical surveys of applications for superintendencies, the gathering of statistics on the number of qualified women not serving as administrators, and case studies of individual women who currently serve as superintendents. Is there a special political atmosphere that brings about the hiring of a woman?

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<sup>1</sup>Gretchen Niedermayer and Vicki W. Kramer, "Women in Administrative Positions in Public Education" (A position paper presented to the Recruitment Leadership Training Institute, Washington, D.C., July, 1974), p. 16.

Educators concerned about utilizing the leadership abilities of both men and women need to address themselves to some of these questions and concerns.

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**APPENDIX A**

**SAMPLE LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS**

# DRAKE UNIVERSITY

DES MOINES, IOWA 50311

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

January 10, 1979

Dear Superintendent:

Full utilization of the talents of both men and women in leadership positions in our schools is an educational goal worth achieving. Current statistics, however, appear to reflect a decline in the number of women in public school administration. Many factors have been identified as possible causes for this decline. These include school district reorganization, the influence of the "business" model on school management, declining enrollment and sex discrimination.

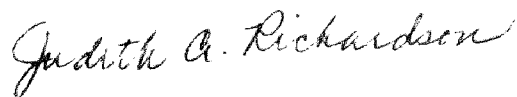
Up to this time it appears no NATION-WIDE STUDY has focused on the superintendency in an effort to identify similarities and differences among men and women in that role. Study of this group could provide important data to those women and men who aspire to that leadership position in public education. The enclosed questionnaire, part of a doctoral study, has been designed to obtain relevant data about characteristics of superintendents and their perceptions of factors that helped or hindered them in obtaining the superintendency.

Please use some of your valuable time to complete this questionnaire. All information will be held in confidence and only group data will be reported. Coding is for remailing purposes only.

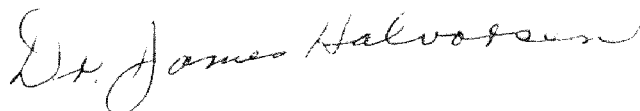
Please return the questionnaire in the stamped envelope provided by January 25 and indicate on the instrument your desire for an abstract of the results. Your assistance and cooperation in this research effort is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Judith A. Richardson



Dr. James Halvorsen



**APPENDIX B**

**SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Request Abstract \_\_\_\_\_

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO OBTAINING THE  
POSITION OF SUPERINTENDENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Questionnaire Directions: Check most appropriate answer to fill in blank.

A. PERSONAL DATA

1. Sex
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ Male
2. Age
  - ☐ Under 26
  - ☐ 26-35
  - ☐ 36-45
  - ☐ 46-55
  - ☐ 56-65
  - ☐ 66 +
3. Racial/Ethnic Origin
  - ☐ American Indian/Alaskan native
  - ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
  - ☐ Hispanic
  - ☐ Black, not Hispanic origin
  - ☐ White, not Hispanic origin
4. Marital Status
  - ☐ Single
  - ☐ Married
  - ☐ Widow/Widower
  - ☐ Divorced or Separated
5. Children, if any
  - ☐ 1
  - ☐ 2
  - ☐ 3
  - ☐ 4
  - ☐ 5 or more

B. PROFESSIONAL DATA

6. Highest Degree Held
  - ☐ Bachelors
  - ☐ Masters
  - ☐ Specialists
  - ☐ Doctors
  - ☐ Others \_\_\_\_\_
7. Major Field of Highest Degree
  - ☐ School Administration
  - ☐ Curriculum/Planning
  - ☐ Business/Public Admin.
  - ☐ Other Professional(law,etc.)
  - ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Years Experience in Education Prior to First Administrative Appointment
  - ☐ 0-3
  - ☐ 4-6
  - ☐ 7-10
  - ☐ 11-14
  - ☐ 15-19
  - ☐ 20 or more
9. Age at First Administrative Appointment in Education
  - ☐ Under 30
  - ☐ 30-35
  - ☐ 36-40
  - ☐ 41-45
  - ☐ 46-50
  - ☐ 51 or over

10. Indicate Categories (May check more than one) of Positions Held Prior to Superintendency
  - ☐ Teacher - Elementary or Secondary
  - ☐ Counselor
  - ☐ Vice/Assistant Principal
  - ☐ Principal - Secondary
  - ☐ Principal - Elementary
  - ☐ Supervisor/Coordinator of Curr. & Instruction
  - ☐ Director, Elementary or Secondary Education
  - ☐ Assistant Superintendent
  - ☐ School Bus. Management
11. Number of Years in Present Position
  - ☐ Less than a year
  - ☐ 1-3
  - ☐ 3-6
  - ☐ 7-9
  - ☐ 10 or more
12. Length of Longest Superintendency Held
  - ☐ 1-3 years
  - ☐ 4-6
  - ☐ 7-9
  - ☐ 10 or more
13. Number of Superintendencies Held Including Present One
  - ☐ 1
  - ☐ 2
  - ☐ 3
  - ☐ 4
  - ☐ 5
  - ☐ 6 or more
14. Present Salary Range
  - ☐ Less than \$20,000
  - ☐ \$20,000 to \$25,000
  - ☐ \$25,001 to \$30,000
  - ☐ \$30,001 to \$35,000
  - ☐ \$35,001 to \$40,000
  - ☐ \$40,001 to \$45,000
  - ☐ \$45,001 to \$50,000
  - ☐ \$50,000 and above
15. Number of Students in District Where Employed
  - ☐ 25,000 or More Students
  - ☐ 10,000 to 24,999
  - ☐ 5,000 to 4,999
  - ☐ 3,000 to 4,999
  - ☐ 1,000 to 2,999
  - ☐ 600 to 999
  - ☐ 300 to 599
  - ☐ 299 or less

C. PERCEPTIONS OF HELPING OR HINDERING FACTORS

Study each factor and check the response indicating the degree to which you feel the factor helped or hindered you in obtaining the position of superintendent.	Greatly Hindered	Slightly Hindered	No Effect	Slightly Helped	Greatly Helped
16. Level of support from district superiors.					
17. High percentage of males in administrative positions.					
18. Level of support by personnel of colleges and universities to become an administrator.					
19. College and university placement service.					
20. Local district's selection process for administrative positions.					
21. Affirmative action and Title IX.					
22. School board attitudes, opinions, philosophy.					
23. Home and family responsibilities.					
24. Necessary changes in geographic location.					
25. Political atmosphere of district (example: feelings toward predecessor.)					
26. Personal educational philosophy.					
27. Personal appearance, height, weight, physique.					
28. Previous work experience as classroom teacher, principal, etc.					
29. Expectations of community involvement connected with position.					
30. Marital status.					
31. Physical strength.					
32. Religious affiliation.					
33. Being a man or woman.					
34. Recruitment procedures.					
35. Level of support of family and or spouse.					

FOR OPTIONAL RESPONSES AND COMMENTS PLEASE USE REVERSE SIDE.